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ABSTRACT

Rural education is confronted with new problems, responsibilities, and opportunities to contribute to the solution of major issues facing the United States. It is generally agreed that about 10 million rural people are poor and that they constitute one-third of the nation's economically disadvantaged. The paramount cause of present urban problems stems from the migration of hordes of economically and socially deprived and displaced persons from rural areas to urban centers. The vast majority of states having large rural populations have fewer fiscal resources per child to support educational programs than the average state. Multi-district organizations are providing some of the answers to rural education problems due to scarcity of population, small school districts, geographical isolation, and an inadequate tax base. The primary challenge in rural education is to drastically improve the quality of its educational offerings and to make education relevant for those who will remain in the community and for those who will migrate to urban areas. In the document, rural education is discussed in terms of the foregoing factors; national organizations concerned with rural education are cited; 9 regional and state education improvement projects are described; and recommendations to correct deficiencies in rural education for the 1970's are listed. (JH)

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Rural Education in The United States

by

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POPULAR MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY SAYING:

We are a nation of big-city dwellers;
the overwhelming bulk of our population
resides in the urban areas.

POPULAR LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY SAYING:

It's not ignorance that hurts so much as
knowing all those things that ain't so.

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INTRODUCTION

Rural Education is confronted with new problems, responsibilities and opportunities to contribute to the solution of major issues facing our country. At the same time it is face to face with the proposition, held by many persons in positions of leadership and responsibility, that rural education no longer exists. The decreasing farm population, the virtual elimination of the one-room school, together with the consolidation and reorganization of school districts are used to support this erroneous notion.

What are the facts? How large is rural America?

> "Although declining, its total population still exceeds the combined population of America's 100 largest cities. It is large enough so that rural America may be classified as the world's ninth largest country. (Only China, India, U.S.S.R., U.S., Japan, Indonesia, Pakistan and Brazil have total populations that exceed the rural population of the U.S.) No country in Europe, and only one in Latin America (Brazil) has a total population that exceeds the size of America's rural population." [1]

The definition used by the U.S. Census Bureau for "Urban" contributes to the prevailing view that the U.S. is a highly urbanized nation. What is the picture if we look at population density?

> "The accepted minimum measurement of an urban environment is a population density of 1,000 or more per square mile. The measure of suburbanization is a population of 500 per square mile. Approximately one-third of the states, 17 to be exact, do not contain a single county with a population density of 500 persons per square mile. Twenty-three states have a population density of less than 50 persons per square mile, and 37 states have a density of less than 100 persons per square mile." [2]

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[1] Swanson, Gordon, *Rural Education News*, Vol. 22 #1, March 1970.

[2] *Ibid.*

"Rural, furthermore, means an important segment of our nations' population--one third. It is a segment that is not decreasing in proportionate size, despite the alleged urbanization of our society. It is a segment that tends to be overlooked in these times of pre-occupation with urban crises.

"Although solving urban problems in our country should have top priority, the severity and magnitude of similar problems in the development of human resource and in the provision of basic services and facilities are no less important in rural areas. The importance is for rural living itself, not just because rural areas contribute so many undereducated, unskilled migrants to urban areas.

"Rural means people. It includes farmers, but it also includes men and women following every occupation known who choose to live beyond city limits in housing subdivisions, in towns, and in the open country. It means people with a strong desire for privacy, living space and self-reliance. It means people with a pride in home and family. It means people looking for opportunity who have left the country for the city. Rural means America, our history and much of our dreams.

"Thus, the rural distinction is important because it represents so much of what America has been as well as what it hopes to be. Rural means life at a scale that is comprehensible to the individual. It is important that we preserve and strengthen this option." [3]

RURAL POVERTY

While differences in definition result in different statistics, it is generally agreed that about 10 million of our rural people are poor and that these constitute one-third of the nation's economically disadvantaged. [4] As the President's National Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty pointed out in *The People Left Behind:* "Rural poverty is so wide spread and so acute as to be a national disgrace, and the consequences have swept into our cities violently....Rural poverty is acute in the South, but it is present and serious in the East, West and the North...." In short, it is scattered throughout our country. Most of the rural low income groups are white, but poverty is particularly acute among the white of

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[3] Copp, James A., *The Meanings of Rural--A Third of Our Nation;* 1970 Yearbook of Agriculture.

[4] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, *Extent of Poverty by Residence and Color,* Administrative Document. Includes only farm and rural non-farm outside SMSAs. If rural non-farm inside SMSAs are included, the number of rural poor becomes 11.1 million.

Appalachia and the Ozarks, the Negroes of the South, and the Spanish speaking and Indians of the Southwest. It especially affects agricultural migrants, the share croppers, farm laborers, and rural industrial workers.

Findings of the Commission include:

(a) Close to 14,000,000 Americans are poor (annual income less than $3,000), with a high proportion of them destitute.

(b) There is more poverty proportionally in rural America than in our cities. In metropolitan areas, one person in eight is poor and in the suburbs the ratio is one to fifteen; in rural areas, one in every four persons is poor.

(c) Some 30 percent of our population lives in rural areas, but 40 percent of the nation's poor live there. Within this total, there are nearly 3,000,000 families plus 1,000,000 unattached persons.

(d) Most rural poor people live in small towns and villages, with only one in four of these families living on a farm.

(e) Of the 14,000,000 rural poor, there are 11,000,000 whites.

(f) The usual cutoff for determining a family as being poor is an annual income of approximately $3,000 per family.

(g) Yet, in rural America, 70 percent of the poor struggle on less than $2,000 per year and one family in four exists on less than $1,000 per year. The rural poor who lack education either concentrate on low-paying jobs in rural areas or swell the ranks of the under-employed in urban areas.

(h) Negroes, American Indians, and Mexican Americans suffer even more than low-income whites from unemployment and underemployment, with their schooling usually being less than that of whites in areas of rural poverty.

(i) For many rural children, hunger is a daily fact of life and sickness is expected. Many of the children are not only hungry, in pain, and ill, but also their lives are being shortened. They are losing their health, energy, spirits, and are dying directly or indirectly from hunger and disease. The children are starving to death!

In metropolitan areas, one out of every eight is poor; in rural areas, it is one out of every four.

Families living on farms are, on the average, the poorest; they have only half as much money as do rural non-farm families. For non-farm rural families in 1959, the median income was 84 percent of the national median; for farm families it was only 57 percent. [5]

Unemployment in rural areas is much greater than in the rest of the country. Rural underemployment also is heavier than the national average, due in large part, to the seasonal nature of much of the available work and to the general inaccessibility of full-time remunerative work. Using 1960 Census data, the Department of Agriculture estimated, for example, that underemployment among rural farm persons was over 36 percent. [6]

Rural poverty is a problem of major proportions which affects the individual as well as the community in which he lives. The larger the community, the more readily available are its social services. Conversely, the poorest, most isolated communities have the fewest services, at the highest per capita cost, although they are least able to pay for them. Migration to the cities of young adults in the productive ages has left behind a large proportion of those in dependent categories,

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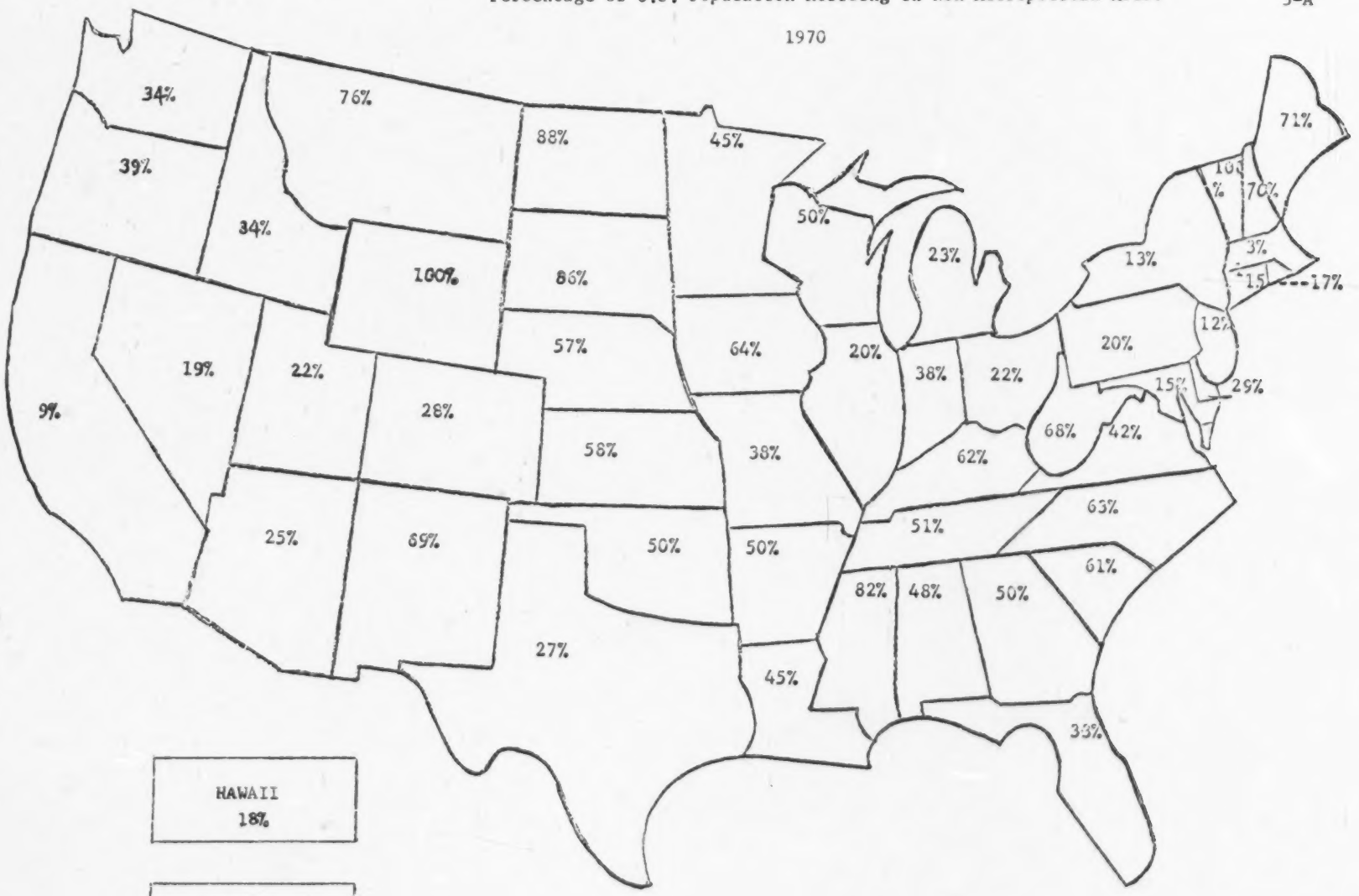
[5] U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Services, *Rural People in the American Economy*, October, 1966, pp. 16, 17 and 28.

[6] Unpublished data from the Economic Research Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Percentage of U.S. Population Residing in Non-Metropolitan Areas

1970



(Source: Series P-20,No.197;March 6,1970
U.S.Department of Commerce,Bureau of the Census.)

including children as well as the aged. The needs of these groups are great; their resources are limited.

The relative isolation of many rural communities, their prevailing cultural level, their relative population decline, their scarcity of local leadership, their inadequate tax base, their economically irrelevant political boundaries, their shortage of well qualified personnel and their resistance to change have, in effect, conspired to keep public services inadequate: schools are poor; transportation is often unavailable; and health and social services are frequently nonexistent.

The shortage of resources is illustrated in a number of ways, for example, in a recent housing survey it was found that only half of all rural homes--and only 11 percent of those inhabited by nonwhites--were in sound condition, with complete plumbing. [7]

In the area of health, the data illustrate what is generally true for all kinds of rural services; they are greatly inferior to those in the cities. Only 12 percent of this country's physicians, and 18 percent of the nurses, serve rural areas. [8] Large metropolitan centers, in 1962 had 195 physicians, rural areas had only 53 per 100,000 population. [9]

Another statistic: In 1961, four percent of the country's mental health clinics provided services in rural areas, and only two percent of all clinic manhours were expended on rural children. [10]

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[7] *Rural People in the American Economy, op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

[8] *The People Left Behind, op. cit.*, p. 63.

[9] *Rural People in the American Economy, op. cit.*, p. 28.

[10] *The People Left Behind, op cit.*, p. 60.

The Hill-Burton Act, in building hospitals, met some of the most critical needs for hospital beds, yet isolated rural counties still have only half as many general hospital beds per 1,000 population as do metropolitan areas.[11]

Recent government efforts have not had sufficient impact on rural poverty. Over $740 million of the Office of Economic Opportunity's expenditures between November 1964 and November 1965, for example, were allocated to urban programs, compared to about $222 million going to rural projects. Rural expenditures for community action programs for fiscal 1968 constituted 24 percent of CAP funds. If Head Start is excluded, they amounted to only about 19 percent of total CAP spending.[12] The Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations pointed out that "many of the poorest 100 counties, measured by per capita income, have not been reached by programs of the Act. In contrast, most of the richest counties, on the same per capita basis, are participating fully in the program." All of the poorest counties were rural.

Clearly, greater efforts and new organizational patterns and strategies must be found to bring adequate services to America's rural communities.

A larger proportion of rural youths is disadvantaged than is the case for those in the metropolitan areas. Community services available to them, as illustrated above, are greatly inferior to those for young people in the rest of the country. Schools are the one public agency which touch the lives of most families, yet rural education suffers from all the problems which beset other rural institutions.

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[11] *Rural People in the American Economy, op. cit.*, p. 28.

[12] From preliminary results of FY 1968 Office of Economic Opportunity Statistical Report.

"Rural adults and youth are the product of an educational system that has historically short-changed rural people. The extent to which rural people have been denied equality of education opportunity is evident from both the products of the educational system and the resources that go into the system. On both counts, the quality of rural education ranks low." [13]

Additional findings of the Committee include:

(a) Schooling in low-income areas is as inadequate as incomes! Rural people generally have poorer schooling and are more severely handicapped by lack of education than are city people. Few rural poor adults have attained the general rural average of 8.8 years of schooling.

(b) Low educational levels seem to be self-perpetuating. When the head of a rural poor family has no schooling, his children are handicapped in their efforts to get an education.

(c) Rural people, handicapped educationally, have an especially difficult time acquiring new skills, getting new jobs, or otherwise adjusting to society's increasing organizations.

(d) The rural poor who lack education either concentrate on low-paying jobs in rural areas or swell the ranks of the underemployed in urban areas.

(e) Many people in underdeveloped areas have developed a culture of poverty. The poor have a different set of values, for example, education to the middle class stands as a road to self-betterment, but to some poor it has become an obstacle to surmount until one can go to work.

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[13] *The People Left Behind, op. cit.*, p. 41.

(f) In 1960, more than 700,000 adults in rural America had never enrolled in school. About 3.1 million had had fewer than five years of schooling and could be classified as functional illiterates, and more than 19,000,000 had not completed high school. More than 213 million rural young people (aged 14 through 24) had left school before graduation. About 8.7 percent (some 199,000) had completed fewer than five years of school. Only 11 percent of the rural adult population had enrolled in college, compared with 19 percent of urban America.

RURAL AND URBAN RELATIONSHIP

According to the mass media our nation is in serious crisis due to deep-rooted problems in our large cities. Many of these problems stem from mass population crowded together, poor housing, insufficient schooling, lack of jobs, low income, poor health facilities, lack of recreational facilities, discrimination, and low personal aspiration. However, the paramount cause of the current situation stems from the migration of hordes of economically and socially deprived and displaced persons from farms, villages, and small towns into urban centers which traditionally have been poorly equipped to absorb them. The one-way stream of rural-urban migration is the basic causal factor of the urban problem.

There is some awareness that the "Urban Crisis" will not be solved in isolation and without solving the "Rural Crisis." Recently, Daniel Parker in dissenting on the omission of rural and non-metropolitan disadvantaged in a study by the committee for economic development stated: "The other group, omitted by definition, is the rural and now-metropolitan disadvantaged. They are germaine to these studies--not only because of their special educational needs, per se, but as well because success in attaining the objectives of this study will augment an already burdensome problem of one way migration from rural to metropolitan areas." [14]

[14] *Education for the Urban Disadvantaged,* Committee for Economic Development, March 1971, p. 80.

He was objecting to limiting the study to urban poor. The committee's justification was stated as "by concerning this statement on the urban poor we do not suggest that the plight of American Indians or other rural poor is less tragic or less worthy of our concern. We simply recognize that the urban areas, which house 51 percent of poor Americans, are now in a state of acute and even desperate crisis with far-reaching social implications for our total society." [15]

J. P. Lyford in his book, *The Airtight Cage*, states, "Why, for instance, must huge concentrations of unemployed and untrained human beings continue to pile up in financially unstable cities that no longer have jobs, the housing, the educational opportunities or any of the other prerequisites for a healthy productive life? Why do we treat the consequences and ignore the causes of massive and purposeless migration to the city? Why are we not developing new uses for those rural areas that are rapidly becoming depopulated? Why do we instinctively deal with rural and urban America as if they were separate, conflicting interests when, in fact, neither interest can be served independently of the other?"

This is further documented by the Secretary of Agriculture in September 1967 when he released the publication *Communities of Tomorrow*. "For too many years too many people have crowded themselves into central cities--people attracted by hope, often the illusion of greater opportunity." Wouldn't it make more sense for rural and urban experts to join together and solve "America's problems?"

SCHOOL DISTRICT REORGANIZATION AND CONSOLIDATION

No other aspect of state and local government has experienced more organizational reform than has the legal framework within which the public school system operates.

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[15] *Ibid.*

In the past 40 years, there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of public school districts in the United States from more than 127,000 in 1932 to 17,498 in 1970. The table below illustrates this decline:

NUMBER OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Year	Number
1932	127,649
1948	105,971
1953	67,075
1961	36,402
1970	17,498

School District Reorganization and school consolidation are among the most significant accomplishments throughout most of rural America, and this trend can be expected to continue until we reach a total of not more than 5,000 local school districts supported by 250 to 500 intermediate school districts. Reorganized school districts and consolidated schools, with the help of fleets of school buses, have made a high school education accessible to many youths who previously were denied a high school education. In general, consolidated schools have more diversified program offerings, a larger quantity of up-to-date instructional materials, laboratories and libraries, as well as better utilization of professional staff.

However extensively positive these changes have been, schools in rural areas have a long way to go. Despite all the reorganizing to date, over 33 percent of them enroll 300 or fewer students; almost 80 percent of them have an enrollment of less than 2,500. More than one-third of the students enrolled attend schools with under 5,000 students. In most cases these are rural children. They attend schools in districts far too small to offer a comprehensive educational program.

The following table "Distribution of operating local public systems and number of pupils, by size of system, for the United States: Fall 1970" makes these comparisons most vivid.

TABLE I - Distribution of operating local public school systems and number of pupils, by size of system, for the United States: Fall 1970.

SIZE OF SYSTEM	PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM		PUBLIC SCHOOL PUPILS	
	Number	Percent	Number 1/	Percent
Total operating systems.....	17,498	100.0	45,037,667	100.0
Systems with 300 pupils or more.....	11,704	66.9	44,429,905	98.7
25,000 or more.....	191	1.1	13,493,237	30.0
10,000 to 24,999.....	557	3.2	8,041,609	17.9
5,000 to 9,999.....	1,104	6.3	7,626,270	17.0
2,500 to 4,999.....	2,018	11.5	7,036,096	15.6
1,000 to 2,499.....	3,448	19.7	5,634,730	12.5
600 to 999.....	1,976	11.3	1,541,080	3.4
300 to 599.....	2,410	13.8	1,056,883	2.3
Systems with less than 300 pupils...	5,794	33.1	607,762	1.3

1/ These figures represent the sums of the reported "enrollment" figures, which are not comparable from State to State. The official Office of Education fall 1970 elementary-secondary enrollment figure will be reported in the forthcoming publication Fall 1970 Statistics of Public School Systems.

It must be understood that reorganization relates primarily to the Administrative function and does not necessarily result in increased individual school size nor in increased services to small schools. It is necessary to encourage the merger of individual schools as well as the consolidation of school districts.

REGIONAL SERVICE AGENCIES

Multi-district organizations are providing some of the answers to rural education problems due to sparcity of population, small school districts, geographical isolation and an inadequate tax base. These regional education agencies (often referred to as "Intermediate Units" because they function between the local school district and the state department of education) are able to serve larger student bodies by pooling resources through a wider tax base.

Current multi-district organizations range all the way from those which provide purely a planning function to those operating specific programs. Many serve only the school districts in a single county while others are large multi-county operations. No single type of regional service agency is appropriate for all areas or regions. Local conditions and needs should form the basis upon which a regional organization is designed.

However, a core of services should be readily available to each American child, youth and adult, irrespective of residence or the local community's financial ability. Where individual local education agencies are financially unable to do so, provided that they are making a reasonable effort to do so, regional centers, cooperatively developed and using a combination of local, state and federal funds can result in improved educational opportunities for rural people. Services which these centers may provide include those to children, teachers, administrators and the community itself.

Services to children would include, among others:

(a) special education services and programs

(b) vocational educational programs

(c) health and nutritional programs

(d) transportation services

(e) psychological services

(f) special services

(g) programs of cultural enrichment

Services relating to personnel could include:

(a) teacher recruitment

(b) assignments and supervision of staff

(c) curriculum development

(d) the design and production of instructional material

(e) audio-visual services

(f) in-service programs

Administrative services might include:

(a) comprehensive planning

(b) research and evaluation of programs

(c) planning of school buildings

(d) centralized purchasing

(e) writing proposals for funding of programs

(f) dissemination of information to professional and lay people

Services to the community could include:

(a) social service to families

(b) programs of cultural enrichment

(c) adult and continuing education programs

EQUALIZING FISCAL CAPACITY

The vast majority of states having large rural populations have fewer fiscal resources per child to support educational programs than the average state. This is true irrespective of the measure of fiscal ability used. Personal income per child of school age is the most commonly used index of wealth when comparing states. When this measure of ability to support educational programs is used, 29 of the 34 states falling below the national average are states having large populations.[16] The poorest of the predominately rural states has substantially less than one-half the ability to support educational programs than is true of the wealthiest state.

This differential in fiscal ability to support educational programs is reflected in less than adequate facilities and instructional materials, a disproportionate

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[16] Ranking of the State, 1968, Research Division, National Education Association, Copyright 1968, Washington, D.C., p. 31, col. 56.

number of unqualified teachers, a high rate of teacher turnover, fewer and less effective special services, and ultimately a higher dropout rate and inadequately prepared graduates. This in turn has led to high unemployment rates and under-employment rates and in turn to fewer taxable resources.

The most logical mechanism to correct this fiscal disparity among states is the taxing and spending authority of the federal government. If equalization is to be accomplished at a meaningful level at current levels of per pupil expenditures, it will require a federal outlay at least tripling the sum of present federal subventions for elementary and secondary educational assistance. In fact, it has been recently recommended that the federal government assume 15 percent of the total cost of public elementary and secondary education in 1971-72; 25 percent in 1973-74; and 33-1/3 percent in 1975-76.[17] This is compatable with the NEA legislative goal of having the federal government assume at least one-third the cost of public elementary and secondary education. Such funds would have to be distributed in an inverse ratio to state wealth per child with requirements that the states, in turn, redistribute such funds on a fiscally equalizing basis.

While the total of present federal subventions for elementary and secondary educational assistance is moderately equalizing[18] a number of formula changes could be made which would make these funds even more equalizing and thus benefit predominately rural states to some degree, recognizing the fact that the sums involved in these distributions are not great enough to accomplish significant equalization of fiscal resources among the states.

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[17] The Realities of School Finance; American Association of School Administrators.

[18] Special Report for Advisory Council on State Departments of Education on Federal Aid for Education, Division of State Agency Cooperation, 1968, Chart I.

Inadequate fiscal resources represent only one variable associated with rural areas and one which the federal government can take direct action to remedy through its formula for distribution of fiscal resources. Another and equally important need differential, which the federal government can also act on through its mechanism of distribution, is the educational need differential identified with specific groups of children such as the physically and mentally handicapped, the culturally different, the non-English speaking, and the drop out. There is clear evidence that children with these handicaps occur in disproportionate numbers in rural and inner city areas. However, educational programs which have shown some success in remedying the handicaps are typically more expensive than the regular day school programs. Consequently care should be taken in disbursing federal funds to the states for educational assistance for the disadvantaged. All too often pupil counts utilized as the basis for state entitlements do not include cost weightings for these high cost pupils. Instead, simply a total count of children of school age or pupils enrolled is the typical measurement of pupil need used.

(An excellent example of a non-weighted pupil count was utilized in Title II of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.) Recognizing this fact, federal subventions for the support of elementary and secondary education include counts of disadvantaged children with an appropriate cost weighting assigned such pupils. Of course, the states should be required to redistribute such entitlements on a similar basis of need.

In most operating educational programs, two cost over-burdens are usually associated with rural areas and areas of sparse population: (1) additional costs due to distances pupils must be transported, and, (2) additional costs associated with small administrative units. These costs are referred to as "equal service over-burdens" because it costs more to provide an equal amount of a given service of these types in sparsely populated areas than it does in urban or suburban areas.

Many states have long recognized this fact and have made some provision in their program of school support to compensate these school districts for these cost overburdens. The federal government must also understand the concept of cost overburden in distributions of funds for educational assistance. The states should be required to take into account such cost overburdens in the redistribution of funds from any federal general education aid program which may be enacted. However, redistribution requirements must not be set which rewards or perpetuates inefficient school district organizations.

EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS IN RURAL SCHOOLS

The primary challenge in Rural Education is to drastically improve the quality of its educational offerings and make it relevant for those who will remain in the community as for those who will migrate to the urban areas.

Pre-school and kindergarten programs are not readily available in rural areas. For the country as a whole, accessibility to kindergarten is in direct proportion to community size. For five year olds in 1968, 71 percent of those living in urban areas were enrolled in kindergarten. However, in non-metropolitan areas, only 56 percent attended kindergarten. [19]

Rural schools generally need to be stimulated into giving more attention to the needs of disadvantaged youth. This implies more individualized instruction, realistic, sympathetic counseling together with a curriculum which is more relevant to the needs of children. Irrelevant curricula, unresponsiveness to student needs, inadequate preparation in academic and marketable skills, help to drive youth out of school. Students attending rural schools tend to drop out more often and earlier than is true for urban youth.

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[19] U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Office of Education, *Preprimary Enrollment of Children Under Six*, October 1968, p. 12.

For those who are potential drop-outs as well as for the majority of rural students who do not plan on going to college, job preparation is a necessity. Yet a recent study indicated that only eight percent of those not college bound had received any high school vocational training. For youth in rural areas, the job situation is further complicated since for every 18 rural youths reaching working age, only ten jobs are available in their home communities.

Those rural youths who move to the city find themselves ill-equipped in the competition for urban jobs. In school, rural youth's only exposure to occupational exploration and guidance as well as to general and vocational education has been unrelated to today's job market, much less tomorrows'. The President's Committee on Vocational Education in 1963 found that industrial and distributive courses were almost non-existent in rural schools. In many rural high schools, vocational education offered tends to be limited to courses in agriculture and home economics. In numerous cases, rural students have been encouraged to enroll in vocational agriculture when job opportunities are limited and diminishing. Approximately 70 percent of the enrollment in vocational agriculture is in production agriculture courses, although projected employment of farms and farm laborers for 1975 will be down 22 percent from the 4.1 million in 1965.[20]

A major emphasis of a realistic program of vocational education should be the development of careers for tomorrow, including those in the general area of health, education and welfare. Some of the human service occupations require relatively little formal training and would be most appropriate for disadvantaged youth with poor educational backgrounds. Skills acquired in training for such careers have the advantage of being marketable in rural and urban areas.

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[20]Manpower Report of the President, January 1969, p. 235.

Because of the uncertain future facing rural youth, rural schools "should orient students to a cluster of occupations rather than...for a specific job...."[21] Work study programs should be extended to all rural communities. This training would assist rural students, locate jobs, and create a pool of skilled manpower which in turn could lure new industry into the rural community.

Small rural schools often have difficulty providing effective vocational programs because qualified instructors and adequately equipped shops are rare in such schools. Regional vocational schools need to be established whereby students could attend on a part-time basis while continuing their education at the local high school. These area schools would share facilities as well as vocational personnel among the participating high schools.

In view of the fact that over one-third of all rural adults have had less than eight years of formal schooling, it is imperative that the recommendation of the "President's Commission on Rural Poverty" become a reality. The Committee stated "that the federal and state governments step up present efforts to eliminate illiteracy and increase the level of general education among adults, and that other institutions and agencies serving rural people, such as churches, community organizations, business organizations, labor unions, cooperative extension service, and agricultural agencies, be enlisted in support of these programs."

By and large, rural schools fail to attract and retain good teachers. While there are many fine, dedicated and competent teachers serving rural schools, their proportion is far too small and their impact rather limited. To attract and retain competent teachers in rural areas will require extensive, massive and deliberate efforts in recruitment, basic preparation, on-going in-service education, higher salaries, and adequate facilities, equipment and instructional materials.

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[21] President's Advisory Commission on Rural Poverty.

The first problem in improving the quality of rural education partly stems from the available clientele. Two major groups are represented: natives seeking initial employment and outlanders seeking temporary employment--typically wives of graduate students in nearby colleges and universities and wives of military personnel from nearby bases. Not only do the rural people tend to seek teaching certificates through smaller institutions of higher education near home, but the more aggressive and ambitious of these tend to seek their first teaching assignment elsewhere. Those who remain to teach in rural schools are likely to be less adventurous and less ambitious. Some years ago a study conducted by the U. S. Office of Education of Higher Education in South Dakota found that only 39 percent of the state's college graduates entered teaching in South Dakota. There was evidence which indicated that many of the more competent were those who took their initial teaching assignments in Minnesota, California, and New York. Ambition and salary were prime factors. Wives of graduate students and of military personnel are definitely temporary teachers. Many leave the school system during the school year because of their husbands being transferred. Most of those with adequate teacher preparation and even with experience are not prepared for rural conditions nor for the rural point of view.

The net effect is that much of the clientele most readily available to staff rural schools lack drive, permanence and relevant preparation. One antidote is an aggressive and systematic effort to recruit and challenge a large proportion of our most competent and dedicated youth to prepare for teaching careers in rural America. This will require better salaries, and more readily available opportunities for continuing study and professional growth.

This in turn leads to other problems. Too many four-year institutions that prepare rural teachers are "suitcase colleges." They tend to be small and cannot command the exciting curricular and co-curricular programs that challenge scholars

today. Consequently, students tend to go home for weekends when they should be exploring the stimulating cultural, intellectual and recreational resources available on campus.

This raises another closely allied problem. Although many competent dedicated professors do settle in such institutions and contribute to society, the more ambitious and aspiring staff members tend to graduate to the larger more prestigious institutions. A massive campaign on rural values and ways of life, as well as enrichment of facilities, cultural opportunities and salary to attract and retain a larger proportion of high quality staff in rural oriented colleges will be required. Although this is a difficult challenge, it is not impossible. Rather it is a matter of commitment. Many of the more significant institutions of higher education are both small in enrollment and located in non-urban areas. They are not provincial in outlook but rather dynamic centers of learning which attract able students and employ faculty from far and wide. Basic preparation received in these institutions by future rural teachers under outstanding professors is an essential ingredient if we are to meet the challenge.

Also required is a program designed for the continued professional growth and development for rural teachers. This means that there must be increased opportunities for financially supported in-service workshops, for summer study and sabbatical leave. While the enrolling legislation exists under the Education Profession Development Act, current level of funding is woefully inadequate to meet the national scope of the problem, plus the fact that a large proportion of the funding is basically urban-oriented so rural teachers are left out.

Ways must be found to remedy the salary problems facing rural teachers. People tend to gravitate toward school systems with higher salaries and better working

conditions. If we really want better teachers to staff our rural schools, we must pay a premium over and above the regular salary schedule. This is done in Yugoslavia and appears to work.

A far more complicated cost-based problem is that of facilities, equipment and instructional materials. Aside from funding, the problem relates to the proposition that equipment and materials are needed even if for a few pupils. As great a variety of science equipment, for example, is required for a school enrolling 100 as for a school enrolling 1,000 students. Thus the per pupil cost of equipment in the smaller school is appreciably higher and in turn are financially less able to provide it. Mobile laboratories are one possible answer. Instructional TV is another. At any rate adequate means of instruction, even though expensive in rural schools must be provided, not just to educate children, but also to satisfy and retain the most competent teachers. Otherwise they will go where the resources are. Again, Yugoslavia is a good example. There was a time when her scholars trained abroad refused to return home. Now Yugoslavia's institutions of Higher Education are able to compete with Germany, Great Britain, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. to provide the best of equipment and laboratory resources, and they are attracting their scholars home again. We could learn from this, if we only wanted to.

Solving the problem of recruiting and holding highly competent teachers in rural America is a matter of commitment and dedication. Once this basic decision is made, legislation and monies will follow. The prime reason we are caught in this dilemma comes from insufficient concern from all levels of government, the educational enterprise, professional agencies and organizations and from the public. A massive effort is called for to change attitudes, recruit with challenges and opportunities, sharpen basic preparation, provide effective programs of inservice

education, make rural oriented colleges attractive to college professors, and provide excellent facilities, equipment and instructional materials in rural schools and colleges alike.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS HAVING PARAMOUNT CONCERN WITH RURAL EDUCATION

There are two national organizations whose prime concern is rural education. They are: The Rural Education Association and The Educational Resources Information Center.

The Rural Education Association, a department of the National Education Association, grew out of the Department of Rural and Agricultural Education, authorized by the NEA Board of Directors in 1970; reorganized under the name of Department of Rural Education in 1919; renamed Rural Education Association in 1969. Membership is open to teachers, local, county, and intermediate administrators and their staffs; State Department of Education staff; college or university staff; and others who are concerned about education in a rural society.

It is organized to improve and expand educational opportunities in rural areas and smaller communities throughout the United States; to engage in research projects and studies and provide information concerning rural education to its members and the general public; to encourage research; to endeavor to focus attention on rural educational programs; and to coordinate with other organizations with purposes similar to those of the Rural Education Association.

The Educational Resources Information Center is an information system designed to help teachers, principals, education specialists, administrators, school board members, parents, students and researchers obtain current and historical information in the field of education. Research reports, program evaluations, curriculum guides, instructional materials, professional information, and many other kinds of information which would be of value to an educator or educational researcher are collected, evaluated, and made readily available through ERIC's publications.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools (ERIC/CRESS) is charged with the responsibility for acquiring, indexing, and abstracting information related to all aspects of American Indian education, Mexican-American education, migrant education, outdoor education and recreation, rural education, and small schools. The ERIC/CRESS is located on the campus of New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

INNOVATIONS

Even though many rural schools are beset with numerous problems, there are numerous examples of innovative programs currently operating in many rural and small schools. It would be a tremendous task to list and describe all such programs. The following examples are illustrative of the diversity and scope of these educational innovations.

1. Although many school systems consider the busing of students a time-consuming task, the Gunnison Watershed School District (Colorado) has demonstrated that the time spent by students on buses can be educationally profitable. This school district covers approximately 3,200 square miles and enrolls some 1,500 students, some of whom spent 40 hours or more per month traveling to and from schools. One of the school buses has been adapted by adding electronic equipment, including a seven channel audiotape deck and headsets. Each student has his own volume and selector control. Three of the seven channels are reserved for differing student age levels. Another channel is restricted to AM radio programs. The remaining channels are reserved for special independent study tapes requested by individual students. Weekly the students receive a listening guide on the programs available and select the channel which most closely meets their needs.

   In addition to tapes used for supplementary and enrichment work, tapes of appropriate special events at the school and community are broadcast.

In this manner the students have an opportunity to become involved in some of the activities that they would otherwise miss.

2. The Appalachia Educational Laboratory has developed and field tested a home-oriented design for preschool education of three, four and five year olds. The program is built around a daily television lesson which is broadcast on a commercial station and viewed by the child and his mother at home. On a weekly basis a para-professional visits the child's home to counsel with the parents and to deliver materials for further lessons. Once each week, group instruction is provided in a mobile classroom which locates near the pupil's home. The cost of this program is only one-half that of the conventional kindergartens.

3. An innovative project designed to improve instructional performance of teachers in rural and small schools was carried out in 1969 through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' Rural Education Improvement Project. The primary thrust of this project was to determine the effect of an adaptation microteaching on the instructional behavior of rural school teachers. Specific objectives were:
   (a) to ascertain whether the opportunity for rural teachers to observe, analyze, and evaluate their teaching behavior (as recorded on video-tape) had any relationship to a change in the teachers' instructional performance, and
   (b) to identify the nature of this change in instructional performance in terms of general teaching competence, pupil-teacher interaction behavior, and teacher attitude.

The following results were obtained:

(a) there were significant indications of improvement in terms of instructional skill, pupil interaction, and teacher attitude, and

(b) none of the variables of sex of teachers, level of teaching position, and length of teaching service had a significant relationship to this improvement effect.

It was concluded that a rural teacher's opportunity to see and hear his performance in the classroom has a very significant improvement effect on the teacher's instructional performance.

4. Many rural school districts have banded together forming regional educational centers. Through this "coordinated planning" a small school district can share project writers and can combine efforts with needs to qualify for financial assistance available through various federal programs. One such center was a two-state venture designed to serve 100 small school districts in 17 counties of North Dakota and Minnesota. This center, located in Grand Forks, North Dakota, is named the "Upper Red River Valley Educational Service Center." The major goals of this center include:

   (a) providing psychological diagnosis, testing and treatment as well as counseling and guidance service;

   (b) assisting schools in developing and implementing inservice training for teachers;

   (c) acting as a catalytic agent and resource agency to schools in promoting and developing curricular and instructional improvement, and

   (d) providing programs of cultural enrichment to schools and communities.

5. Quality adult education in America faces three major obstacles:
   (a) the scarcity of educational materials designed specially for rural adults,
   (b) the physical distance separating individuals who share a need to know, and
   (c) the lack of qualified consultants for those rural adults who desire and need extra help.

   The Rural Family Development is a national three year rural adult basic educational demonstration and research project being tested in Wisconsin's Dane, Green, Iowa, and LaFayette counties.

   R.F.D. surmounts the obstacles by coupling the newest in educational television with the best in printed materials prepared specially for the rural adult and providing person-to-person contacts in the home with qualified teachers. The goal of R.F.D. is to motivate the undereducated rural adults to learn those life-coping skills necessary to enjoy the full benefits of life.

   The home of the R.F.D. member is his classroom. He can take any of the materials available at his own leisure, at his own pace, and in his own way. The home-visiting teacher will visit and counsel each R.F.D. member weekly. This specialized personal contact is needed to enhance and reinforce the television and printed material.

6. Another adult basic education project regionally based, serves the 13 states in Appalachia. The Appalachian Basic Education Demonstration Center develops and tests programs, materials, facilities, teaching techniques and educational technology for undereducated adults, and

studies the characteristics of the Appalachian people that encourage and hinder change. It is based on the belief that behavioral change begins when undereducated adults develop the basic learning skills.

Testing new approaches to old problems is the life purpose of the center's many demonstration projects underway in 11 states.

How do you recruit students in isolated areas? That was the subject of a two-way study in the extremely isolated northeast section of Georgia. The experiment increased enrollment from 95 to more than 600 persons and developed 29 adult basic education classes, clearly establishing that paid ABE-related recruiters were by far the most effective recruiters and tended to ensure retention of adults in classes (80%).

Some side effects of adult basic education were studied in a West Virginia project. A long range follow-up of 85 graduates revealed that their education had not only increased their employability, but also broke them free of their habitual immobility. They were open-minded about moving out of their home communities to seek jobs. Study of a small random sample of school age children of adult basic education students found a rise in achievement while their parents were in adult basic programs, one-third showing less absenteeism and one-third exhibiting fewer behavioral problems.

7. An ingenious program is shared among the widely separated desert communities located in southern California, where three school districts (San Bernardino, Inyo and Mano) have arranged for shared services in art. Since many, if not most, of the children residing in these rural areas have never seen works of art, let alone been shown how to draw and use art materials, a bus was converted into a museum on wheels. Personnel

from southern California art museums, colleges and universities and local civic and cultural organizations provide assistance and advice to the project. This mini-museum permits the sharing of art with those living in rural areas.

8. Project Mid-Tennessee provides students with a children's museum by using a large tractor-trailer labeled as a "yellow submarine." Children in mid-Tennessee are being exposed to various educational exhibits in science. Additionally these students have been enriched through visits by the Nashville Symphony Orchestra. Prior to the visitation, pre-concert materials were provided to the classroom teachers; after the concert, informal conferences between musicians and students in the school were held. Provisions were made to provide music clinics as a follow-up activity. These clinics, designed to generate local interest in continuing musical programs, are conducted by orchestra members for interested musicians in rural areas.

9. In many school situations the availability and use of resource people has not been feasible due to their inaccessibility, however, the use of the amplified telephone has neutralized this obstacle. By attaching a rather inexpensive device, called an amplifier, on a telephone, groups of students are able to listen to, and interact with, a person located great distances away.

   One program in Colorado linked several Colorado schools ranging as far apart as 265 miles, used the amplified telephone technique to transmit instruction in American history. The instructor was located in his office at Gunnison, while the students remained in the individual small schools.

Lecture topics ranged from the "Roaring Twenties" through the "Coldwar." Among the advantages were, instantaneous two-way communication, lack of extensive travel, and the use of specialized discussion personnel on a short time basis.

One of the more unique uses of this innovation was an art class which originated in Mesquite, Nevada. Instructors of "Art by Telephone" prepared and sent overlays and other projective materials to the participating schools in advance of the bi-weekly scheduled class time. This was followed by lecture and discussions with the students over the amplified telephone system. In most cases this was their initial exposure to art and without this approach would not have had any formal art training through the school system.

REGIONAL AND STATE RURAL EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Even with the massive reorganization and consolidation of school districts there remains the need to upgrade the quality of Rural Education. There are several regional or state projects designed to improve Rural Education. Some projects are funded with federal and/or state funds, while others have been funded by foundation.

Currently operating projects include:

1. The Alaska Rural Schools Project was initiated through the leadership of the University of Alaska. Its primary thrust was to prepare teachers to teach in wilderness areas. The Project was also concerned with developing relevant instructional materials and educational objectives pertinent to the environment-cultural uniqueness in remote villages. The Bureau of Indian Affairs of the United States Department of Interior and the Alaska State Department of Education cooperated with the Project. Currently additional support is being given by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

2. The Appalachia Educational Laboratory, funded under Title IV of P.L. 89-10, headquartered in Charleston, West Virginia, is primarily concerned with rural schools located in isolated mountainous regions of Appalachia. Primary thrusts of the Laboratory include:

   (a) A reading and language development program based on animated cartoons to teach word recognition, phonetics, and spelling. Initial lessons are designed for pre-school children and it is anticipated that they will be made available, via TV, to all preschool children in Appalachia.

   (b) A student-activated system providing vocational information for both education and work. Under this program Appalachian youth will be given information on job opportunities.

   (c) A unique home-oriented preschool education program combining TV, home visitation and a mobile classroom.

3. The Catskill Area Study Council has been serving school districts in this rural area of New York State since 1951. Currently, its' major thrusts include:

   (a) To provide a variety of in-service educational opportunities for staff members of schools in this area.

   (b) To conduct limited research on local concerns such as professional negotiations, staff turnover, etc.

   (c) To bring together school board members, school administrators, and resource people to share ideas, solve problems and exchange viewpoints on current issues.

   (d) To provide enrichment opportunities for area high school students through Saturday and Sunday seminars for "Able and Ambitious" high school students. These seminars, currently in their 13th year, offer courses ranging from Psychology to Aviation Ground School; from Organic Chemistry to Metal Sculpture.

(e) To bring resources of the State University College at Oneonta into open contact with the school of the area and provide an opportunity for them to meet, exchange ideas, and assist each other and the children in the schools.

(f) To provide special purpose services to schools as they are needed. For example, a speech correction and diagnostic service has been in operation for the past two years.

Management services are provided by the University in the form of providing a part-time executive secretary. All programs are paid for by the participating school districts. Most, but not all, of the programs are held on the university campus.

4. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, funded under Title IV of P.L. 89-10, with headquarters in Portland, Oregon, has as one of its major thrusts the improvement of Rural Education. Areas currently being explored include:

   (a) designing a model for creating a community environment receptive to innovative practices;

   (b) specifications for school buildings in which the needs of the rural community will be provided;

   (c) a self-instructional system for elementary school use;

   (d) a multi-media self-instructional system designed for use in the rural secondary schools.

5. The Oregon Small Schools Improvement Project's headquarters is in Salem, Oregon. The Project's major thrust is on curricular innovations with emphasis on individualized instruction, teacher utilization, and scheduling modifications.

6. The Rural Education Improvement Project, sponsored by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, with the main office located in Atlanta, Georgia, is funded by a foundation. It involves a consortium of educational institutions, organizations, and collaboration agencies. The Project currently operates one rural center in each of three southern states: Florida, Georgia, and Tennessee. Each of the three centers have the following components:

   (a) teacher education;

   (b) communication and computation skill development;

   (c) continuous progress approach;

   (d) family involvement;

   (e) cultural enrichment;

   (f) school-home-community liaison service; and

   (g) paraprofessional staff aids program.

7. Texas Small Schools Project was initiated by the Texas Education Agency, Austin, Texas, in 1959. There are 149 schools, divided into 12 regions, currently participating in this project. In addition to inservice training, the Project aimed at offering an increased number of educational experiences, initiating more effective use of school facilities and equipment; individualizing instruction and strengthening guidance and testing programs.

   Modifications such as multiple classes; supervised correspondence study; and cooperative service programs between schools whereby teachers, supervisors and educational materials could be shared were included in the Project. This Project is coordinated by the Texas Small Schools Association and is financed through the Texas Education Agency and the participating schools.

8. The Upper Midwest Small Schools Project, with offices at Grand Forks, includes 15 North Dakota member schools and one in Montana. Project objectives are to identify potential leaders in rural education to provide assistance and materials in developing this leadership, and to establish organizational patterns which will lead to facilitating and installing educational innovations.

9. The Western States Small Schools Project was initiated in 1962 and continued with foundation support through 1968. Since that time, funding has been minor and the project has not grown at its earlier pace. Five states have participated in the project: Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah. Each state has a project director and the project is coordinated through the office in Carson City, Nevada.

   Each participating state has focused on its unique concerns as well as cooperating with the other states in finding solutions to problems common to all.

   (a) The Arizona Small Schools Project has developed programs to meet the needs of both teachers and students through individualizing the teaching-learning process.

   (b) The Colorado Small Schools Project concentrated on new methods, techniques, and organizational patterns.

   (c) The Nevada Small Schools Project has used a variety of instructional media and materials to reduce the effects of smallness and isolation.

   (d) The New Mexico Small Schools Project emphasized linguistic reading and improved preparation for culturally different rural children, and Spanish has been stressed for the Spanish-speaking child.

   (e) The Utah Small Schools Project has developed guidelines for an environment designed to stimulate and encourage independent study and individualized programs of instruction.

And Now--

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE '70's

A strong national commitment is needed which recognizes:

(a) that problems facing the urban United States cannot be resolved independently;

(b) that rural America exists;

(c) that it has serious problems;

(d) that its problems can and must be solved;

(e) that rural problems and urban problems must be attacked jointly; and

(f) that this joint attack is a national responsibility.

The Recommendations of the U. S. Office of Education's "Task Force Report on Rural Education" should be implemented. The principle recommendations of the Task Force are:

(a) Establish a rural unit in the United States Office of Education.

(b) Develop and adequately fund a National Center for Rural Education.

(c) Establish one or more model rural schools.

(d) Induce the various states to take appropriate action.

(e) Provide incentive funds to teachers in rural areas.

(f) Provide incentive funds for shared services.

(g) Provide funds to support interstate councils or commissions.

National Teacher Associations must:

(a) Aggressively propose, promote and support national legislation which will improve education, with fair and equitable treatment of the rural segment of society, strengthen the rights of all teachers, and enhance educational opportunities for all children, youth and adults.

(b) Become the spokesmen for the future by gathering and disseminating information which will aid in attacking the crucial problems facing rural education.

(c) Provide the leadership to assist all educators to higher levels of professional performance, with recognition of the unique concerns of rural educators.

(d) Apportion part of their resources to assist local teacher associations to design and implement "Model Programs" with special emphasis on the unique concerns of rural educators.

(e) In cooperation with state and local education associations, provide technical assistance to strengthen local teacher associations.

State and Local Teacher Associations must:

(a) Guarantee equitable representation of teachers working in rural areas in policy making functions.

(b) Assure an adequate voice for rural people in developing community-school relationships.

(c) Seek legislative remedies for equalizing the tax burden to assure equitable taxes.

Most of the deficiencies in rural education stem from a combination of problems associated with personal poverty, community isolation, limited public services, lack of leadership, and the concomitant of these factors--insufficient taxable resources to support educational services and programs which are available in other parts of the country.

If these recommendations are implemented, a number of goals for rural education will be achieved.

(a) Equalization of opportunity, through improved course offerings and the extension of education to both pre-school children and adults; through more and better qualified staffs; through adequate facilities, materials and supplies; and through expanded technical assistance to rural communities by the Office of Education.

(b) Improved research, experimentation, evaluation, and development of new practices through the establishment of regional education agencies and a National Center for Rural Education; and through a unit in the Department of Health, Education and Welfare which would coordinate and stimulate Federal programs pertinent to rural education.

(c) Fiscal and organizational reform through the redistribution of funds based on the incidence of poverty and other factors affecting the schools' financial need; and through the reorganization of school districts into agencies of optimum size.

(d) Increased relevance to educational needs and fuller community participation in education through the modernization of the rural schools' curricula and through the development of closer rapport between the schools and the community.

A former U. S. Commissioner of Education pointed out in 1954: "The problem in rural education is in some respects like urban education. In some respects it is a very special one...It is not purely a rural problem to be solved by rural people only. What happens in rural communities affects all of America. Urban people have a vital stake in the education of rural children." [22]

This point of view was re-emphasized in 1966 by President Lyndon B. Johnson when he stated,

> "Not just sentiment demands that we do more to help our farms and rural communities. I think the welfare of this nation demands it. And strange as it may seem, I think the future of the cities demand it too....The cities will never solve their problems unless we solve the problems of the towns and smaller areas....We must make better use of the 99% of this country which lies outside the big cities of America." [23]

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[22] Brownell, Samuel M., U.S. Commissioner of Education, "As I View Rural Education," address presented at the 1954 Conference on Rural Education.

[23] Johnson, Lyndon B., President of the United States, Speech given September 3, 1966, at Dallastown, Pennsylvania.